

**Peer education in HIV/AIDS prevention,
does it make any difference in knowledge and behaviour?**

A study among 10 Secondary Schools in rural Nigeria.

**A dissertation submitted by
Frank van der Maas**

in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Science in International Health (MIH)

Supervisor:
Bernadette Peterhans, Swiss Tropical Institute, Basel

Swiss Tropical Institute
University of Basel, Switzerland.

June 2007

Summary:

Especially young people in Sub-Saharan Africa are threatened by HIV/AIDS. It is estimated that globally half of all new infections (over 7.000 daily) are occurring among people aged 15-24. Young people are vulnerable to HIV because of lack of information, risky behaviour and poverty.

HIV/AIDS prevalence among population aged 15-49 years in Nigeria is presently 4.4%. Nigeria has one of the world's largest concentrations of HIV/AIDS infected individuals with 3.5 million infected adults and children.

HIV/AIDS peer education in secondary schools seems an appropriate approach to reach young people in an effective way. Peer education is an approach that is used to effect change among members of the same group. It has been used in many areas of public health and is now also used in HIV/AIDS prevention programs. Research about the effectiveness of peer education in HIV/AIDS prevention programs, suggests it has a positive impact on knowledge and sexual risk behaviour.

This study has been conducted in 10 secondary schools in Izzi, a rural part of Ebonyi State, South East Nigeria. The study objective was to identify if peer education is an effective method to improve knowledge and sexual behaviour among young people in secondary schools.

The study consists of 3 parts, a cross sectional study before and after intervention, a comparative case series and a qualitative study, using Focus Group Discussions.

The results of this study show that there are significant differences in knowledge and sexual behaviour in all schools with peer education programs compared to schools without peer education. Knowledge about modes of transmission are higher, misconceptions lesser, information more available and sexual behaviour less risky.

As peer education in secondary schools seems to be an effective approach in HIV/AIDS awareness programs, it is recommended that peer education programs will be extended to more schools.